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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Tuesday, June 18, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CANNING AND OTHER QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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At this time of the year, the mailbag is full of questions about canning fruits and vegetables. So today let's start with a question from a woman who wants to be all ready when peaches and apricots are plentiful. She asks, "When I can peaches and apricots, shall I can the stones or pits with the fruit?"

And here's the answer. The Federal Bureau of Home Economics says that peaches of the clingstone varieties, and apricots, too, are sometimes canned whole without removing the pits. And so are pickled peaches. But when the stones or pits are removed, the fruit is in smaller pieces and will cook in a shorter time. That means the texture of the fruit is better.

In the Government bulletin on home canning, No. 1762-F, the directions for canning peaches recommend putting one cracked peach pit per quart into the sirup used in canning. This pit is strained out before the sirup is used, but it adds to the fine flavor of the home canned peaches.

Next question. "Why did the peaches, pears, and green gage plums that I canned last summer turn dark?" asks a woman in Ohio. "I canned them in the oven at 275 degrees Fahrenheit for an hour."

Canning specialists of the Bureau of Home Economics have a suggestion about this brownish discoloration. It seems that quite frequently when pears, peaches, and apricots are packed into jars without precooking they take on a brownish color. The reason is that these fruits contain an enzyme which "oxidizes"--that is, the enzyme combined with the oxygen in the air and in the can,



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and discolors the fruit. The slow oxidation starts during the canning process and may continue throughout the storage of the canned fruit, or even after the jar is opened.

If you precook your fruit for several minutes until it is heated through before you pack it into the jars, you will prevent discoloration by destroying the enzyme which causes the trouble and by removing air from the fruit. If you pack the fruit hot and process it in a hot water bath, it will have a better texture when canned. That's because fruit, precooked and packed hot, needs a shorter canning period than fruit packed cold. By this method, apricots and peaches need only 15 minutes, pears 20 minutes.

The next writer lives in Detroit. Here's his letter: "Is it necessary to open cans and take the food out of the can, in order to heat it? It is much more convenient for me to heat food right in the can when I am away from home, in order to get the foods on my diet list."

And here's the answer.... You can take food out of the can to heat it, or you can heat the unopened can in a pan of hot water. The cans themselves do not contain any substance that would harm the food. But it is possible that some thickly packed canned foods, such as spinach, might not get very hot at the center of the can by this method unless they were heated for a long time. But the degree of hotness is a matter of personal taste.

Here's an inquiry of another sort, also from a man, who lives on a farm in Minnesota. "Does it make any difference what kind of utensil is used to heat carrots or other vegetables? Does the kind of utensil influence the loss of vitamins?"

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To this question the Bureau of Home Economics answers: Any kind of utensil can be used for heating vegetables. The loss of vitamins is the same-- no matter what material the saucepan or kettle is made of. No matter what you cook your vegetables in, some vitamins and minerals are dissolved either in water or by steam, and some vitamins are partly destroyed in the presence of heat. So no matter what the material of the cooking utensil, some of the food value is lost completely, and some remains in the cooking liquid. But you can save the food values contained in this cooking liquid, if you serve it with the vegetables. Or make it into sauces, say, or gravies.

Our last problem is on whipping cream. A woman writes: "We have one cow-- Jersey and Guernsey. But the cream always turns to butter when I whip it. I have tried whipping the cream whole and also diluted. I have tried whipping it raw, and I tried just letting the cream come to a boil. All with the same results. I've tried beating by hand as well as with an electric beater, and I've just about given up. My results are always the same. The cream doesn't start to thicken gradually, it just changes to butter without any slightly thickened stage. Can you advise me what to do?"

This discouraged lady seems to have tried about everything, except cold temperature. Dairy specialists say that any cream that turns to butter when whipped, simply was not kept cold, and whipped while cold enough. If the writer of this letter will store the cream at 45 degrees Fahrenheit, and put the bowl in a dish of ice when she starts whipping it, she will have better results.

That completes the pile of letters for today. I'll be back with more food questions next week.

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